

REMARKS

Applicants thank the Examiner for the thorough consideration given the present application. Claims 2-7 and 9-23 are pending. Claims 1 and 8 are canceled herein without prejudice to or disclaimer of the subject matter set forth therein. Claim 2 is amended. Claims 2, 4, 5, 7, 9, 12, 14, 15, 20, 21, and 23 are independent. Reconsideration of this application, as amended, is respectfully requested.

Reasons for Entry of Amendments

At the outset, it is respectfully requested that this Amendment be entered into the Official File in view of the fact that the amendments to the claims automatically place the application in condition for allowance.

In the alternative, if the Examiner does not agree that this application is in condition for allowance, it is respectfully requested that this Amendment be entered for the purpose of appeal. This Amendment reduces the issues on appeal canceling independent claim 1 and objected-to claim 8, and incorporating the allowable subject matter of claim 8 into independent claim 2. This Amendment was not presented at an earlier date in view of the fact that Applicants did not fully appreciate the Examiner's position until the Final Office Action was reviewed.

Allowable Subject Matter

Claims 4-7, 9-23 are allowed. Claim 8 is objected to as being dependent upon a rejected base claim, but would be allowable if rewritten in independent form including all of the limitations of the base claim and any intervening claims.

Applicants thank the Examiner for the indication of allowable subject matter.

In response, independent claim 2 is amended to incorporate the allowable subject matter of objected-to claim 8; and independent claim 1 and objected-to claim 8 are canceled.

As described below, it is believed that independent claim 2 is in immediate condition for allowance.

Claim Rejections under 35 U.S.C. §102(b) and §102(e)

Claim 1 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. §102(b) as being anticipated by Kosuge et al. (EP 09260559 A2); and

Claims 1-3 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. §102(e) as being anticipated by Ooshima et al. (U.S. 6,439,065).

These rejections are respectfully traversed.

Arguments Regarding Independent Claim 2

As mentioned above, independent claim 1 is canceled.

Further, independent claim 2 is amended herein to incorporate the allowable subject matter of objected-to claim 8. Objected-to claim 8 is now canceled.

Therefore independent claim 2 is in condition for allowance.

Since the dependent claim 3 depends from allowable independent claim 2, claim 3 is also allowable for at least the reasons set forth above, as well as the additional limitations set forth therein. All other pending claims have been allowed by the Examiner.

Therefore, reconsideration and withdrawal of the rejections under 35 U.S.C. §102(b) and §102(e), and allowance of all claims are respectfully requested.

CONCLUSION

All the stated grounds of rejection have been properly traversed, accommodated, or rendered moot. It is believed that a full and complete response has been made to the outstanding Office Action, and that the present application is in condition for allowance.

Pursuant to 37 C.F.R. §§ 1.17 and 1.136(a), Applicants respectfully petition for a one (1) month extension of time for filing a reply in connection with the present application, and the required fee of \$120.00 is attached hereto.

However, if there are any outstanding issues, the Examiner is invited to telephone Carl T. Thomsen, Reg. No. 50,786, at 703-205-8000 in an effort to expedite prosecution.

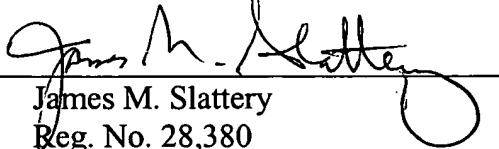
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If necessary, the Commissioner is hereby authorized in this, concurrent, and future replies to charge payment or credit any overpayment to Deposit Account No. 02-2448 for any additional fees required under 37 C.F.R. §§1.16 or 1.17, particularly extension of time fees.

Respectfully submitted,

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